

Operation Anaconda

Q. Mr. President, Operation Anaconda, we've been told, is successful, and——

The President. Operation?

Q. Operation Anaconda, we're being told, is successful, and it's over. Do you feel the war in Afghanistan—that part of the war is now over?

The President. John, I don't. I feel like we've got a lot more fighting to do in Afghanistan. First of all, we were successful in Operation Anaconda. I want to thank our troops, our brave troops, for fighting in incredibly tough terrain and against difficult circumstances. And the difficult circumstances were not only the terrain, it was the fact that we were fighting against an enemy that refuses to surrender. These are people that are there to die. And we accommodated them.

And it's a—but there are more Al Qaida killers in Afghanistan, perhaps in Pakistan, willing to come back into Afghanistan. The reason—and I know for a fact that they were trying to—in the midst of this battle, in the midst of the United States military and our coalition forces being very successful, they were trying to reinforce. And these are people that are—they were willing to reinforce in the midst of the Shahi-Kot Mountain Range, where they were getting wiped out; they were willing to come back into Afghanistan to continue to try to hurt us. These are killers. They hate America. They hate America's freedom; they hate what America stands for. And they are relentless.

But so are we, and we will be more relentless than they are. That's why I've urged the American people to be patient, and the American people are patient. And that's why I've urged Congress to fund the U.S. military. And I hope Congress does fund the U.S. military to the fullest, because we've got a lot more fighting to do in Afghanistan.

Situation in the Middle East

Q. Many Mideast leaders are saying that the U.S. should be focusing more on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and less on Iraq. Can you give a reaction to that?

The President. I appreciate their advice, but we will not allow one of the world's most dangerous leaders to have the world's most dangerous weapons and hold the United

States and our friends and allies hostage. That's just not going to happen. And so I appreciate their advice. But we will continue working with them. We will continue dialog. I have told people that we're a deliberate nation. We'll talk to our friends and allies. But what I said about the axis of evil is what I mean. I can't be any more plain about it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. in a conference room at Albers Manufacturing Co. In his remarks, he referred to Rolf Albers, chairman and chief executive officer, Albers Manufacturing Co.; President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan; Barbara Green, an employee at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, and her daughter Kristen Wormsley, who were killed in the March 17 terrorist attack at the Protestant International Church in Islamabad; U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East Gen. Anthony Zinni, USMC (Ret.); and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel. The President also referred to the Tenet plan, the Israeli-Palestinian cease-fire and security plan of June 13, 2001, negotiated by Director of Central Intelligence George J. Tenet; and the Mitchell Report, the Report of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee, issued April 30, 2001. A reporter referred to Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority.

Remarks to Employees of Albers Manufacturing Company in O'Fallon

March 18, 2002

Thank you all. Gosh, thanks for that warm welcome. It's great to be back in Missouri. And thank you for that hospitality.

I'm so glad that I'm with the Senator today; he is a champion of the small-business person. I look forward to working with him on some good legislation that understands the incredibly important role that the small-business person plays in America. And here it is: On a practical sense, more new jobs are created by small-business people than anybody else.

And I happen to think that the small business—the entrepreneur represents one of the true strengths of our country. I mean, after all, this is a country where if you've got a good idea and you're willing to work hard and you're willing to take a little risk, you

can own your own business. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter how you were raised. It doesn't matter whether you were born in America. What matters is, is that you're willing to dream and work for the dream.

And so one of my jobs is to make sure the entrepreneurial spirit is strong and alive in America, that it continues to flourish so that the great American Dream of owning your own business is vibrant and alive and well. And when we go into the 21st century—and I want to talk about that today, a little bit.

Before I do, I want to thank Rolf and the good folks here at Albers for their hospitality. It's not easy to welcome the President and the entourage—[laughter]—just a mere 14 vehicles. [Laughter] But I do want to thank you for your hospitality, and all the employees with whom I just had an interesting discussion about how to—about what's on their mind, about what's it like to work for a small business and how best—what the Government can do to perhaps make the small business more vibrant and/or deal with some of the needs that directly affect the employees.

Now, I want to thank the other small-business owners who are here. I love what you do. Again, as I repeat, you're an incredibly important part of the future of the country. Thanks for taking risks and for working hard. I appreciate my friend Hector Barreto, for coming. He was born here in Missouri, raised in California, and is doing a fine job as the head of the Small Business Administration in Washington, DC. I had the honor today as well, of traveling with Jim Talent and four fine members of the Missouri congressional delegation, Congressman Akin and Blunt, Congressman Hulshof and Jo Ann Emerson. Thank you all for coming.

I also was met at the airport today by a guy named Derek Rapp. Where are you, Derek? There you are. Got a good seat, I see. [Laughter] That's what you get for coming to the airport. [Laughter] Here's Derek. Derek is the CEO of a small biotech firm. He is an economic entrepreneur, but I'm heralding Derek today because he's also a social entrepreneur. He's a person that understands that with freedom comes the responsibility to love a neighbor like you'd like

to be loved yourself, and I appreciate that spirit, Derek. He started what's called St. Louis Cares. It is a recruiting vehicle to help match people with kind hearts with people who need kind hearts in their lives.

And the reason I want to talk about the Dereks of the world is because in order to win the war against evil, this Nation must continue to practice acts of decency and kindness and goodness. That there is no question that the entrepreneurial spirit in America makes us unique, I think. But one of our other strengths is the fact that our Nation is a kind nation and a compassionate nation and a nation where neighbor loving neighbor is having a profound impact on the quality of our country's life. And so one of the things—and one of the reasons I like to introduce a guy like Derek, is because it helps remind us all about really one of the great strengths of our country, and that is our people.

You know, Government can't make people love one another. I would sign the law. [Laughter] But people loving one another is essential to having a bright future, so that everybody can experience the great American Dream. And we've got pockets of persistent poverty in our society, which I refuse to declare defeat—I mean, I refuse to allow them to continue on. And so one of the things that I'm trying to do is to encourage a faith-based initiative to spread its wings all across America, to be able to capture this great compassionate spirit.

One of my hopes is, out of this evil that was done to our country, is that people, young people understand that living in America is wonderful, but it also requires an effort to make the communities in which they live a better place, that we've got to work to usher in an era of personal responsibility. And part of that era of personal responsibility is not only, you know, obviously taking advantage of the material wealth available if you work hard and have got a good idea, but that there's much greater promise and hope than materialism, itself—materialism, itself, is a dead end—that the idea of trying to work to help somebody in need is a powerful part of having a full and complete life.

And therefore, I ask all of you and all the good folks in Missouri—if you're already

helping a neighbor in need, thank you, and continue doing it. But if you're looking for a way to make your life more full, more complete, mentor a child or help somebody who is shut in or go to a church or synagogue and mosque and say, "What can we do to feed somebody who needs some food?" I mean, there are all kinds of ways that you can help. And by helping, you stand squarely in the face of the evildoers that hit America.

One way to make sure America is strong is to rally the compassion. Another way is to make sure that our economy is strong. I want to tell you right upfront that I do not think the role of Government is to try to create wealth. That's not the role of Government. The role of Government is to create an environment in which people are willing to take risk. And if they've got a good idea—[*applause*]*—the role of Government is to create an economic climate in which the Rolfs of the world say, "Gosh, I've got a good idea. I want to take a risk and, therefore, employ people."* That's really what I view my job is—if there's roadblocks, to eliminate them, and if there's ways to make the environment better, do so.

I wanted to talk a little bit about that. High taxes is a roadblock. High tax rates discourage investment, and when you discourage investment, you discourage job creation. And therefore, working with people in Congress, both the House and the Senate, we worked to reduce the tax burden on working people in America. And it came at exactly the right time. Tax relief was vital. It was vital for our economic future, because when you give people more of their own money to spend, they demand, and when they demand, somebody produces, and when somebody produces, somebody gets to work.

But the other thing that was important about tax relief is that it is—recognizes the importance of small business, because many small businesses are unincorporated. Many small businesses are sole proprietors or are limited partnerships. And by cutting the personal rates, all personal rates, what we are in effect doing for the small-business community was encouraging cash flow. And more cash flow on small-business owners means more jobs.

And so one of the crucial things we've done to address the economic recession and its slowdown and the effects it caused on working people was to say, "Let's give people their own money back." For a while they were talking about taking away that tax relief—"they" being some people in Washington, DC. I couldn't imagine anybody saying, in the midst of a recession, "We're going to raise taxes." They were reading the wrong textbook, Senator. [*Laughter*] Anybody in their right mind knows that if you're interested in making the economy more vital, you let people keep more of their own money. I don't hear much of that talk anymore now that the plan looks like it's working.

But even though the economic news has been positive, in my judgment, we're not out of the woods yet. We've got to keep working for policies in place that encourage more job creation. And one of the other things we did that was interesting, and I think important to the formation of small businesses, is that we dealt with an issue that discourages small businesses, at least in this sense.

If you're Rolf, and you build up your business and build up your assets through years of hard work, you ought to have the—you ought to be able to make the decision of who gets to own that business after you move on. And the death tax made it awfully difficult for you to make that decision. You see, if you're a small-business owner and you're not public, for example, if you're a privately held company, the death tax would cause your heirs to have to liquidate the assets that you built up over a lifetime. It was a terrible tax. We put it on its way to extinction, but I call upon the Congress to make the elimination of the death tax permanent in the Tax Code.

We decided to do more in Washington to deal with this attack on 9/11, particularly from how it affected people's lives. One of my big concerns has been and still continues to be the fact that some of our American workers lost jobs as a result of the enemy attack. And my attitude is, anybody who wants to work and can't find work is a problem for me to have to deal with. And there's a lot of Americans who want to work and can't find work, and so we decided to do something about it.

First of all, we decided to make sure that the people got an unemployment check. If their benefits were about to run out, we extended the amount of time for unemployment benefits, and that was the right thing to do. But I understand people don't want an unemployment check; they want a permanent paycheck. And therefore we asked Congress and worked with Members of Congress who understand capital how best to create jobs, what can we do to make sure that the true part of an economic stimulus package is jobs—its central core is, how to create more jobs.

We passed a bill that encourages investment in plant and equipment, because we think that will be the best thing that will encourage job creation. And we stayed with it and worked hard and got a good vote out of the House and a good vote out of the Senate. And I was honored to be able to sign that bill, which I think is going to be a good part of encouraging investment in job creation.

I also want to take it a step farther. I'm giving a speech tomorrow on—specifically on how best to deal with issues related to small business. I want to talk to you about two issues real quick. One is what's called Section 179 Expensing. Now, if you're not an accountant, I guess it's kind of hard to understand. But see if I can explain it. You know, okay, good. *[Laughter]* Okay, fine. *[Laughter]*

Here's what it means. It increases the maximum deductions small businesses can take when they invest in new plant and equipment. Right now the law lets small businesses immediately deduct the full cost of the first \$24,000 of investment when they invest less than \$200,000 a year. Okay. So what I think we ought to do in order to encourage small business to make more investment, is to increase the limit from \$200,000 to 325,000, and allow for the first-year deduction of \$40,000.

Let me see if I can put this into English or Texan. *[Laughter]* I'm trying to put in place something that will encourage Rolf to go buy a new piece of machinery, which he says he wants to buy, to provide proper incentive for Rolf to go buy a new machine that will make his business more competitive

and, therefore more likely to be able to hire somebody. That will help the manufacturer of the machine employ somebody; that will have an effect throughout the entire economy. And it seems like, to me, if small businesses are vital for the future of our country, if small businesses provide most of the new work for people looking for work and we're worried about people finding jobs, why don't we put something in place that encourages small-business growth? And that's exactly what this does.

One of the things I heard from the good folks who work here is that they're concerned about their health care costs. And if you're a small-business owner or somebody who works for a small business, you're concerned about health care costs, and I don't blame you. I heard what Rolf is going through. I've heard what the people are worried about. Here is one idea to help small businesses deal with high premiums.

One of the reasons small-business owners have to pay high premiums is because they cannot spread the risk of the health care across a lot of folks. Large corporate America, because of the size of their workforce, can spread risk throughout a big workforce and, therefore, pay less cost for health care.

If one of the cost drivers is the need to have more people to spread risk, why don't we try to figure out a way to allow Rolf to pool his risk with other small businesses? And so one of the good ideas—Jim sponsored this bill; I know that Kit is for it—is to allow for what we call associated health plans, which says that if you're a member of the NFIB, for example, the National Federation of Independent Businesses, that they can pool a multitude of small businesses together, thereby driving down the cost of health care.

It makes sense. It is good for small businesses. It is very good for the people who work for small businesses. And it is beyond me why Congress can't figure out why this doesn't—shouldn't work. And so I'm calling on them to give this plan a hard look and get it passed for the good of the American economy.

So today I wanted to talk to you about how we fight evil with acts of decency and kindness at home, how we make sure we've got

economic security for all Americans. But I also want to mention to you pretty quickly that I also understand that my most important job is to defend America, is to make sure that we—is to secure the homeland, is to prevent the enemy from hitting us again. I want you to know, at home we're working overtime to do everything we can to make sure that doesn't happen. We're running down every lead, every hint, every possible threat.

We take seriously, in America, because I still believe—I still know there are people out there that hate our freedoms. They can't stand the idea of a society which welcomes a good idea, and if you've got a good idea, you can succeed. They don't like freedom. They don't like freedom of religion. They don't like freedom of speech. They don't like freedom of politics. They just hate freedom. And therefore—and since we're the beacon of freedom, they want to attack us, and we're doing everything we can to make sure they don't.

But the best way to defend the homeland is to find them where they are and bring them to justice. And that's precisely what we're going to do. We've got a big task ahead of us. And the good news is, the American people understand the size of the task. After all, when you defend freedom, freedom, itself, it may take a while, and the people know that. I've traveled the country enough to be able to report to you all that the Nation is united and patient.

We've made some pretty good progress in a little over 6 months. It wasn't all that long ago that the enemy miscalculated and attacked America, thinking that maybe we were such a materialistic society, we wouldn't defend that which we hold dear to our heart. I said early on, I said, "If you harbor a terrorist or you hide one, you're just as guilty as the murderers." And the Taliban found out what we meant, thanks to a mighty United States military and thanks to a vast coalition of nations that love freedom. We have run out of town, run out of their offices, run out of power a Government that is one of the most repressive Governments history has ever seen.

One of the things that makes me most proud is that we didn't seek revenge; we sought justice. And we went into Afghanistan

not as conquerors but as liberators. I want you to know that later on this week schools reopen in Afghanistan, and this is hard for Americans to believe, but for the first time, young girls get to go to school, thanks to America.

And so the first phase of the war, which was to hold people accountable for harboring terrorists, is over with. That's not to say some may decide to harbor them in the future, in which case they now know the lessons that will—they know I mean what I say. Let me put it to you that way.

The second phase is to deny these killers sanctuary; it's to not let them ever settle down and light anywhere; it's to treat them like what they are, international terrorists, and keep them on the run. And that's what we're doing. And I mean just that—I mean just that: get them on the run and keep them on the run. And if that means months and hunting them down, that's exactly what this country is going to do. Listen, we caught a bunch of them bunched up the other day—*[laughter]*—and they're not bunched up any more.

I have submitted a significant increase in the budget to the Congress. I expect them to pass it. I know the Senators are with me. I know the Members of the Congress are with me. We need to make sure our troops are well trained, have got the best equipment, get a pay raise. And I don't want Congress messing with the budget. They have the right to debate; I understand that. And I can understand—they get the right to spend. I propose; they dispose. I know that. *[Laughter]* But now is not the time to be playing politics with the military budget. They need to get it to my desk early. Generally, the defense budget is the last one—or the defense appropriation is the last one to the President's desk. It ought to be the first one this year.

I want you to know that history has called us into action. History has placed a great responsibility at our doorstep, and I will not miss this opportunity. It is a chance to defend freedom. It is a chance to make sure that our children and grandchildren grow up in a peaceful world. Out of this evil will come some good. America will be stronger at home. We'll be more compassionate and

more decent. Out of this evil will come, I believe, a period of personal responsibility, a new culture as reflected in Flight 93, when people drove an airplane into the ground to sacrifice for something greater than themselves. And if we're tough and resolved and determined, like I know we're going to be, out of this evil will come a more peaceful world for generations to come.

As you can tell, I hope, I'm optimistic. And you'd be optimistic, too, if you got to see what I see. See, I get to travel the greatest land on the face of the Earth. I am optimistic because of the values that make America strong, and I am optimistic because of the people who make her great.

God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:48 p.m. in the factory at Albers Manufacturing Co. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Christopher S. "Kit" Bond of Missouri; Rolf Albers, chairman and chief executive officer, Albers Manufacturing Co.; and Derek Rapp, chief executive officer, Divergence.

Remarks at a Fundraising Dinner for Senatorial Candidate James M. Talent in St. Louis, Missouri
March 18, 2002

Thank you very much. Be seated, please. Gosh, thanks for such a warm welcome. It's always good to have a good introducer. [Laughter] Bucky is my favorite uncle when I'm in St. Louis. [Laughter] He's my favorite uncle all the time; he's a fabulous man. Thanks, Buck. And I like to call Sam Fox, "Foxy." Foxy, I didn't realize you were so eloquent. [Laughter] But I thank you for the leadership, and I want to thank you all for coming tonight. This is a magnificent crowd here to support the next United States Senator from Missouri, Jim Talent.

I appreciate Jim, and I appreciate the fact that he's a family man. Like me, he married above himself—[laughter]—so I appreciate Brenda. It's an honor to meet the three children today, and it's an honor to meet your mother, Brenda. I got a report from my homefront as well—I married really well. [Laughter] Laura is doing great, and I'm so proud of her. She's made a great First Lady for the country.

I want to thank the members of the Missouri delegation who are here, starting with the senior Senator, Kit Bond. Thank you for coming, Kit. I appreciate his leadership on a lot of important issues. Take election reform—he's making sure that we encourage people to vote, but he's working hard to make it tougher to cheat. Half of the Senators understand what he's trying to do. It seems like one out of the two Senators from Missouri understand that.

I want to thank the members from the congressional delegation here as well, Todd Akin, Roy Blunt, Jo Ann Emerson, Sam Graves, Kenny Hulshof. These are fine, fine Members of the United States Congress, and I'm proud to serve with them.

I want to thank all the members of the Republican Party who are here. I particularly want to thank the grassroots activists who man the phones and sign all the letters and get out the vote. I want to thank you for your hard work in 2000. I want to thank you for your hard work that you're fixing to do in 2002.

I'm here to support as strongly as I possibly can this good man to become the Senator—the next Senator from Missouri. And I do so for a reason, and it starts with the quality of the individual. He is a quality person who's got the right values.

He is a steady man, and he is an experienced person who will bring good judgment to the United States Senate. And let me cite some of his qualifications. First, he has been in Washington before. He was there for 8 years in the House of Representatives, where he made a mark of accomplishment.

You know, in that town, we've got some good talkers, and then we've got the doers. We've got some people up there who like to hear themselves talk and others who actually get something done. And that's the way Jim Talent is; he knows how to get things done—things done not only for the good of Missouri, to get things done for—the things of Missouri, but to get things done positively in a positive way for the country.

I want the people of Missouri to remember he served on the Armed Services Committee, and he stood up for a strong national